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T W O
S E R M O N S

OCCASIONED BY

T H E D E A T H

OF THE REVEREND

ROBERT LAWSON, A.M.

Preached at the Scotch Church, London-Wall,
May 5th, 1771.

By T H O M A S O S W A L D,
Minister of the Scotch Church, Ruffel-Street,
Covent-Garden.

Published at the Request of the Church.

L O N D O N :

Printed by W. STRAHAN;
And sold by J. BUCKLAND, in Pater-noster-Row,
E. DILLY, in the Poultry, and J. DENHAM,
near the Hermitage-Bridge.

MDCCLXXI.

W. Musgrave!



S E R M O N I.

PHILIPPIANS, CHAP. I. VER. 21.

FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE
IS GAIN.

THIS Epistle to the Philippians is one of the most affectionate of all them that were written by Saint Paul, who, in zeal for the truths of the Gospel, and unwearied endeavours to promote them, was the greatest of all the Apostles. It is one continued expression of the warmest concern for the interest of the religion of Christ, and the salvation of souls, of the greatest indifference about the enjoyments, and contempt of all the sufferings of this life, and of the most ardent desires after the joys and glories of the next: And the whole of it is written in so divine a manner, that it seems almost impossible to read it with any degree of attention, without being in some measure like Saul among the Prophets, who no sooner heard their conversation and prophecies, but he became a Prophet too. It was written from Rome, where the Apostle was a prisoner for the Gospel of Christ. And the general design of it is to set before the Philippians his own example, as a pat-

tern for them to copy after, and to press upon them the imitation of that zeal, love and joy in the Gospel, so eminently displayed in his own life, and of that heavenly-mindedness which he so ardently breathes.

In the preceding verse he expresses his persuasion, *that Christ would be magnified in his body, whether by life or death*; and he gives the reason of it in the words of the text, *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*. In which words we have the great business of the Apostle's life: *For me to live is Christ*,—and the benefit he should reap by death—*and to die is gain*. And in these two the advantages of living and dying are compared one with another. He knew that for him to live longer in this world would be for the glory of Christ, and the good of his Church; but for him to die soon would be for his own benefit and advantage. Betwixt these two he was in a strait which to chuse. But which soever of them should happen, his mind was quite easy and composed, as he was persuaded that by either of them *Christ should be magnified in his body*. The honour of a Redeemer was his chief concern, and when this was promoted, life or death were intirely indifferent to him.

There is nothing in the words that requires any particular explication, except the first clause, *For me to live is Christ*. And not to waste your time in repeating all that commentators have said upon it, the sense to which it is restricted by the context seems to be this, *For me to live is Christ*; that is, The grand motive which makes me willing to live in a world of so much sin and misery, as the present is, is the glory of my Redeemer and Lord; while my life is preserved, Christ is the sole
object

object and end of all my schemes and actions; and the principal business of it is to promote a sincere faith in his name, and a strict conformity to his example and precepts: And I am convinced that the event will answer my endeavours; so that if I live, Christ shall be magnified, and his honour advanced by me. This mode of expression, *For me to live is Christ*, may appear to some readers uncommon and obscure; but phrases nearly similar occur in the new testament. Christ is said to be in us the hope of glory, Colos. i. 27. because he is not only the great foundation of our hopes of mercy and favour with God, but the efficient cause of all our hopes of eternal happiness. And Colos. iii. 4. Christ is said to be our life, as he is the Author of our new and spiritual life here, and of our glorious life in heaven, and at the same time the blessed object of all the actions of it. And much to the same purpose, says the Apostle in the text, *For me to live is Christ*; he was the great end and final cause of his life, and of all the actions and designs of it. What the Apostle affirms here concerning himself, is equally true of every real Christian and faithful Minister of the Gospel of Christ, who may, each of them in their different spheres, though in an inferior degree, say as the Apostle did, without ostentation and vanity, *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

“ He is the supreme end of my life, and of all
 “ the actions of it, and I value it only as it is ca-
 “ pable of being referred to the purposes of his
 “ glory. And in consequence of this *to die is*
 “ *gain*; because this disposition and propensity of
 “ my soul is an evidence of my interest in the
 “ love of my Redeemer, who is Lord of the in-
 “ visible as well as the visible world; and I am

“ well satisfied that he will make the most abundant provision for my eternal felicity, when I lay down this fading life, and enrich me with infinitely more important blessings than any which I must then resign.”

For the farther illustration of the text, I will

I. Shew in what respects it is true of every Christian, and particularly of every faithful Minister, that for him to live is Christ.

II. Upon what accounts, for them to die is gain.

III. The connection and influence which living to Christ hath to make death to be gain.

And, lastly, Suggest some useful reflections as the improvement of the subject.

I am then, I. To shew in what respects it is true of every Christian, and particularly of every faithful Minister, that for him to live is Christ.

And, with respect to every Christian, for him to live is Christ; 1. As he is indebted to him for natural life, and the continuance of it. We are told by St. John, chap. i. ver. 3, 4. *that all things were made by Christ, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And what these things are which were made by him, we are informed of by the Apostle to the Colossians, chap. i. ver. 16. *For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be Thrones or Dominions, or Principalities or Powers. All things were created by him, and for him.* Every creature, from the highest angel to the lowest worm, received its life and existence from Christ; and the whole human race is the workmanship of his hands. He is the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. He clothed us with skin and flesh, fenced us about with

with bones and sinews, and breathed into us reasonable and immortal souls. And as he made us and all things, so by him all things do consist, Colos. i. 17. and he upholds them by the Word of his power. It is owing to the constant energy of the divine power of the Son of God that we are continued in life, and have the means of subsistence. For he gives us life and favour, and by his visitation we are preserved. And if he withdraw his preserving hand, we return again to the dust of which our bodies were formed. Now for us to live is Christ, as he is the Author and Preserver of our natural life; for in him we live, and move, and have our being: And in this sense, he is the life of all living things, which were made by his power, wisdom and goodness, and are continued by him in that beauty, usefulness and order, in which we behold them. And here, by the bye, it may be observed, that Christ is more than a mere man, or a created God, and is truly God, equal with the Father, in power, glory, and every divine perfection; since creation and preservation are acts of the supreme Deity. But

2. For a Christian to live is Christ, because he is the Author and Promoter of his spiritual and divine life. God made man at first after his own image, and adorned him with all the beauties of holiness. He endowed him with a clear and just understanding, whereby he knew what was necessary to his happiness: With rectitude of will, by which he had a propensity to virtue, and an abhorrence of vice: With holiness in his affections, they being pure and regular, subject to the controul of reason and the will of God.

But

But man, being in honour, did not continue long in that happy state. He sinned in eating the fruit of the forbidden tree, and put all the powers of his soul and body into the utmost disorder. Hereby the understanding became dark and blind, especially as to spiritual things; the will irregular and perverse, full of enmity against God and his law, and prone to pursue what is evil; the affections are all set upon wrong objects, hating what we ought to love, and loving what we ought to hate; and the members of the body are ready instruments of unrighteousness. Upon this account we are said *to be dead in trespasses and sins*, Ephes. ii. 1.

When Christ comes in a day of power, he breathes upon the dry and dead bones, and infuses the principles of spiritual life into the soul. He himself told his disciples, *because I live, ye shall live also*, John xiv. 19. And says St. Paul, *Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me* Gal. ii. 20.

This spiritual life of a Christian is a life of faith, of holiness, and of peace. A life of faith and dependance upon God through Christ, for all we want. A life of holiness, by endeavouring to render back unto God in a way of duty and obedience, whatever we receive from him in a way of mercy and grace. And a life of peace, arising from a comfortable sense of the divine favour and love. This faith is the gift of God, and wrought in us by the spirit of Christ. Ephes. ii. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 10. Holiness is also his work. *For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works,*

works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them, Eph. ii. 10.

The Christian life is termed a participation of the Divine Nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. And believers are said to be born again; to be new creatures; to be raised from the dead, unto newness of life. Of all this Christ is the Author: For he says, John xiv. 6. *I am the way, the truth, and the life.*

And Christ is our life, not only because he implants in the soul those principles of holiness and virtue, in which the spiritual life doth consist; but because he gives those supplies of grace by which it is preserved and advanced. *It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. Colos. i. 19. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. John i. 16.* The saints in Scripture ascribe their proficiency in religion, and perseverance, to the grace of God. *I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only, says David, Psal. lxxi. 16. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah xl. 31.* It is owing to the care of Christ, and the constant supplies of his grace, that the divine life is preserved in our souls, that we make any progress in religion, and are kept by faith unto salvation. Thus for a Christian to live is Christ, as he is the Author and Promoter of the divine life in his soul.

3. For a Christian to live is Christ, as he is wholly devoted to his service. He considers his Redeemer as Lord and Proprietor of his natural life, as having also redeemed him from hell and destruction, with the inestimable price of his blood, and having given him, in the Gospel, a

law of liberty ; and therefore he renounces every other lord and master, and yields himself unto Christ, soul, body and spirit, with a fixed and determined purpose to be his, and employ himself, and all his power and influence, for his Redeemer, and for him only. Though other Lords have had dominion over him, he intirely disclaims them, calls him *his Lord and his God* ; *makes mention of his name and calls himself by it*. He does this from the fullest conviction of the Redeemer's right to his service, gives up himself to the Lord without the least limitation or reserve, and with the greatest sincerity and pleasure ; and that not for any determinate time, but for ever and ever. He says with the Psalmist, *O Lord, I am thy servant, truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds*, Psal. cxvi. 16. *This God is our God for ever and ever*. Psal. xlviii. 14.

4. For a Christian to live is Christ, as the advancing the glory of Christ is the ultimate and chief end of his life. *We are required, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31. And we are directed how to do this. *Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*, 1 Cor. vi. 20.

The Christian who is under the influence of religion, is not so mean as to make the things of this world the scope of his actions ; but as he is of a divine original, and born from above, he does not live unto himself, but unto the Lord. And a good man makes God's glory the end of his life, when a spirit of piety and justice, of meekness and charity, of temperance and humility, influences his heart and actions, and when he abounds in all the fruits of a holy conversation. For, says our Saviour,

Saviour, *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*, John xv. 8. Our own salvation is intimately connected with the glory of God; and the more we advance the Divine honour, the more we promote our own happiness. And it is the pleasure of every sincere Christian to have opportunities of enlarging the boundaries of Christ's kingdom, and of recommending religion to the choice and esteem of others: And life is a burden to him, when he cannot be any longer useful. Thus for a Christian to live is Christ, as he aims at his glory, and makes the advancement of his religion the great design of all his actions.

5. A real Christian can say, *For me to live is Christ*, because he makes his laws the rule of his life. Our Saviour came not into the world to abolish the law, but to fulfil it. And he is so far from indulging his disciples in sin and wickedness, that he enjoins the utmost purity of heart and manners. The laws of the Gospel are a transcript of the Divine perfections, all holy, just and good, prescribe rules to the inward as well as the outward man, and respect the whole of our duty to God, to our neighbour, and ourselves. And the Christian, who is such in truth and in deed, will yield, 1. A sincere obedience to the laws of Christ. God is a Spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. He demands the heart, and desires truth in the inward parts. And unless we serve God with our hearts, our services are but bodily labour which profiteth not. 2. An universal obedience. He will not pick and chuse out of the divine laws, that he may only observe such of them as are easiest, and least opposite to his worldly interest and natural inclinations, and neglect or disobey the rest; but he

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will decline no duty, however difficult or expensive, or contrary to flesh and blood. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet shall offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* James ii.

10. 3. His obedience will be equal and uniform; it will not be by fits and starts, but regular and constant; and upon every known sin and transgression, he will make haste to recover himself by repentance and reformation. 4. His obedience will be growing and persevering. If we are careful to keep the commandments of Christ, we will be always aspiring after higher degrees of holiness, and a nearer conformity to God, that we may be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. We must never be weary in well-doing; but endure unto the end, that we may be saved; and be faithful unto the death, that we may receive the crown of life. We must not draw back from his service, notwithstanding any discouragements or opposition which we may meet with from the enemies of our salvation.

6. A real Christian can say, *For me to live is Christ*, as he is the pattern and exemplar of his life. Our Lord came into the world, not only to deliver us from the wrath to come, by giving his life a ransom for many; but to set us an example, that we might follow his steps. And as he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners: So the same mind ought to be in us that was also in him. *He that saith he abideth in him; ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked,* 1 John ii. 6. He hath given us an example in our nature, exhibiting the same duties which are required of us, under the same circumstances of difficulty and temptation to which we are exposed. It hath peculiar charms to engage us to imitate

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it; and it is adapted to the use of persons of every rank and condition of life. He was the greatest personage that ever appeared upon the earth; and therefore is a proper example for those who are in the most exalted stations to copy after. And as he was exposed to all the hardships of poverty and suffering, he is a suitable pattern for the poor and distressed. Every one of us should manifest in these our mortal bodies the life of Jesus, and carefully imitate him.

1. In the exercise of love to God. The heart of Christ glowed with a supreme love to his heavenly Father: His honour lay always near his heart; and he was well pleased to undergo the lowest abasement to advance the glory of God. Hence, at the close of life, he could appeal to his Father, and say, *I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,* John xvii. 4.

2. We must imitate Christ, by trusting in God at all times. When his disciples wanted him not to go up to Jerusalem, because the Jews sought to stone him, he refused to comply with their desire, being firmly persuaded that God would stand by him, and preserve him. John xi. 9, 10. When one of his disciples drew a sword in his defence, he both expressed his dislike of the action, and his trust in his Father's readiness to help him. *Think-est thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels,* Math. xxvi. 53. The same trust in God he testified to the last; and when he was hanging upon the cross, he told the penitent thief, that *he should that day be with him in Paradise,* Luke xxiii. 43.

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3. We must imitate Christ in his piety and devotion. He was the most pious person that ever lived. Though he had no sins to confess, and few secular things to pray for, which send us to our prayers; yet he frequently retired from the world, and employed himself in secret converse with God. He was most regular in attending upon public worship; and often spent whole nights in prayer upon the cold mountains. If the sacrifice of devotion was not always burning, yet the fire which consumed it was always alive.

4. Christ hath set us an eminent example of obedience and resignation to the will of God. Having undertaken to be the Father's servant, he came into the world to do his will; *and he reckoned it as his meat to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work*, John iv. 34. In the performance of it, he strictly observed the instructions which his Father gave him. He did not decline the most difficult and painful services, but was obedient unto the death, even the death of the cross. Without a repining thought, or a murmuring word, he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and the greatest sufferings that ever were inflicted upon any innocent person. He went through the whole barbarous tragedy of his murder with an intire resignation to his Father's Will. *Not my Will, but thy Will be done*, was his language to his Father in heaven, when about to suffer all that the justice of God, the fury of devils, and the cruelty of men were ready to inflict upon him.

5. We are to imitate Christ in his disinterested love and compassion for the souls and bodies of men. For the benefit of the human race, he came from the bosom of the Father, and the plenitude

nitude of celestial glory ; and was made flesh, and dwelt among us ; lived a life of penury and sorrow, and died a painful and accursed death. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*, John xv. 13. *But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*, Rom. v. 8. His love was not confined to any distinctions of men : He considered the whole human race, as one great family, of which God is Head : He lived and died for the benefit of mankind ; and the constancy of his love appeared in his always *going about and doing good*.

6. He was an illustrious example of humility and meekness. He veiled his divinity with the rags of our humanity, appeared in a poor and afflicted condition, and was so swallowed up in the sense of the Divine perfections, that he was as nothing in his own eyes. Instead of working his miracles out of ostentation and pride, he often strictly charged those who saw him work them, to conceal them ; and when the glory of God required the publication of them, he instructed those who saw him do them, to ascribe them not to himself, but unto his Father, by whose power he wrought them.

As to meekness of temper, and forgiving of injuries, though he met with the grossest insults and provocations, yet he constantly maintained the greatest composure of soul. When he was reviled, he reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not. Though he stood in no need of forgiveness from men, and could, if he had pleased, have revenged himself upon his enemies ; yet with his last breath he declared his forgiveness

giveness and charity. *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*, Luke xxiii. 34.

7. He hath likewise set us an amiable pattern of self-government, of contempt of this world, and all its grandeur and pleasures,—of contentment,—and heavenly-mindedness. His life was filled with mortifications and hardships: He was pleased with the most common fare, and such as came in his way. He travelled much upon foot, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, and was wholly superior to the pleasures of appetite and sense. His heart and conversation were intirely in heaven; and though he was sometimes so poor, as to live upon the charity of others, yet he was perfectly contented with his state.

Lastly, He was an illustrious example of obedience to his earthly parents, and of a peaceable and inoffensive behaviour. It is said, He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them, Luke ii. 51. He conformed himself, both unto human and divine institutions; and rendered unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsars; and unto God, the things that are God's.

Such was the life and actions of the blessed Jesus. And every Christian will study carefully to copy after his divine pattern. *For him to live will be Christ*, as he will always have his example in his eye, and make it the main concern of his life to transcribe it in his actions.

Having thus shewn in what respects it is true of every Christian, that *for him to live is Christ*; I proceed,

II. To shew that, for a faithful Minister, especially, *to live is Christ*. And this in the

1st place, As the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world is the end of all his ministrations,

tions, and the thing which makes his most arduous labours easy and delightful. He receives his call and commission to preach the Gospel from Christ, otherwise he runs without being sent. And, having devoted himself to the service of God in the Gospel of his Son, he does not preach himself, but Christ Jesus our Lord; and is willing to spend, and to be spent in his service. He takes a real pleasure in publishing the word of salvation, and in being in any measure instrumental in turning men from darkness unto light; and from the power of Satan unto the service of the living God. This was the great aim of St. Paul's ministry. With unwearied diligence he travelled from country to country, preaching the Gospel of a crucified Saviour; and he had such delight in the promoting his interest, that he gloried in reproaches, in perils, and in persecutions upon his account.

2. A faithful Minister of the Gospel does actually advance the glory of Christ both by his public and private instructions and exhortations. He will insist much upon man's lost and undone state by nature, his utter inability to save himself, and his need of a Saviour; he will open up and explain the divine and mediatory glory of the Redeemer, and so recommend him to the faith, the love and obedience of his audience. He can say, as St. Paul did, 1 Cor. ii. 2. *I am determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* He will not accommodate his discourses to the false taste of a degenerate age, nor handle the Word of God deceitfully; but he will preach the Gospel in its native simplicity and purity, and not shun to declare all the counsel of God. Convinced that there is not salvation in any other but a crucified Saviour, *he preaches*
Christ

Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

The Christian Minister will not think that he hath done his duty by preaching only the ~~doctrine~~ doctrines of the Gospel, but will carefully inculcate all the moral virtues. And when this is done upon Christian principles and motives, it is preaching Christ, and the grace of God, which teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. He will adapt his discourses to the capacities of his audience, and bring them to the level of the most vulgar understanding; and he will always endeavour to make those who hear him wiser and better, even wise unto salvation.

A faithful Minister, whose aim is to win souls to Christ, and to form them to a divine temper and life, will constantly have a regard to the various cases of them who are under his pastoral care. He will denounce the terrors of the law to alarm the sinner; and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make him fly for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before him. He will shew the backslider the ingratitude and danger of his conduct with a view to reclaim him. He will comfort the spiritual mourner with those consolations of God that are neither small nor few. He will recommend to the tempted, the shield of faith, wherewith they shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And to them who are bowed down with bodily afflictions, he will suggest such grounds of resignation, patience, and comfort, as to make them say with St. Paul, *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation*

solation also aboundeth by Christ, 2 Cor. i. 5. We faint not, for though our outward man perish yet the inward man is renewed day by day, 2 Cor. iv.

16. In a word, to gain sinners to a conformity to Christ, and to obedience to his laws, is what the faithful Minister aims at in all his public and private instructions and exhortations.

The Apostle Paul was honoured with much success in his labours, and a happy instrument of converting many thousands unto the faith and obedience of the Gospel. And every conscientious Minister of Christ will have some seals of his ministry, some of whom he can say, *In Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel*; and who will be to him his crown of joy and rejoicing in the day of Christ.

3. A Minister of the Gospel advances the glory of Christ, by his constant and earnest prayers to the God of all grace, for the conversion and salvation of sinners. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, saith St. James, availeth much, iii.*

16. St. Paul in almost every Epistle tells those to whom he wrote, that he was frequent and importunate in prayers and supplications for them, Rom. i. 9. *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit, in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers*; and 2 Tim. i. 3. *I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers day and night.* A faithful pastor like Moses stands in the breach to avert God's judgments from his people, and to draw down blessings from heaven upon them, when they deserve a curse. And surely to preserve them from wrath for whom Christ died, and

to procure mercies for them is much to the glory of Christ.

4. A faithful Minister, by the sanctity and exemplariness of his manners, is a living example of Christ among his people; and by this he maintains and promotes a conformity to the life of Christ, which is his glory. He carefully copies out all those graces and virtues which shone with such attractive lustre in the Author and Finisher of our faith; he imitates his Divine Master in love to God and men, in humility, meekness, patience, fortitude, self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness: And makes his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father which is in heaven. St. Paul exhorted the Corinthians, *to be followers of him, even as he was of Christ*, 1 Cor. xi. 1.

Thus for a faithful Minister *to live is Christ*.

Let us improve what hath been delivered.

1. In examining ourselves, whether *for us to live is Christ*. Self-examination is a necessary and important duty; and when properly performed, it tends much to our comfort and advancement in the divine life; and therefore is often inculcated in sacred writ. *Let a man examine himself*, 1 Cor. xi. 28. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates*, 2 Cor. xiii. 5.—Have you been quickened from the death of sin, and made alive unto God and righteousness through Jesus Christ? Or have you only a name to live, while you are spiritually dead, and strangers to the power of godliness? Are you the devoted servants of the Lord, who have joined yourselves unto him in a perpetual covenant? Or are you still in league with

with Satan the enemy of God and holiness? Do you make the glory of God and your Redeemer the chief end of all your words and actions? Or are you religious only from fashion or worldly views? Do you make the laws of Christ the rule of your temper and conduct? Do you serve him with willing minds; or do you put him off with a bodily service? Do you make conscience of keeping all his commandments, and think none of them grievous? Or is your obedience but partial; and do you observe only such as you think easiest, or most for your worldly advantage? Are you constant and uniform in Christ's service; or do you obey him but by fits and starts? Are you continually aspiring after greater improvements in holiness; or are you satisfied with present attainments? Do you make Christ the pattern of your life, and carefully imitate his example in love to God, and charity to men; in a firm trust in God's providence, in piety and devotion, in patience and resignation, in meekness and humility, in temperance, in contentment, and heavenly-mindedness, and in obedience to lawful authority? Or are you lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God? Do you murmur and repine at the disposals of providence, and distrust God's mercy and grace? Do you neglect family and secret devotion? Are you impatient under trials and afflictions? Are you passionate and proud, intemperate and earthly-minded, and evil speakers of dignities and powers? — Let me intreat you to beg of God to assist you in making these inquiries; saying in the language of the Psalmist, Psal. xxvi. 2. *Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.*

Let you who upon this trial can say, I trust, I am alive unto God, and Christ is my life, bless and praise the Lord by whose power and grace you have been born again; and endeavour to live as becometh the children of God, and the followers of Christ, by being holy as he who hath called you is holy; and be much in prayer to God for continued supplies of his grace and spirit, to strengthen you with all might in the inward man, and to keep you by his power through faith unto salvation. And let me beseech such as are spiritually dead, and strangers to the divine life of a Christian, to think of their misery and danger; and without delay to come to Christ that they may have life.

2. We see here, the great duty of all the Ministers of the Gospel. *For them to live is Christ.* His glory must be the end of all their ministrations, and the advancement of it the constant employment of their lives. They must be intirely devoted to the service of Christ; and as it were *be eat up with zeal* for his honour and interest. They must preach the whole Gospel of Christ. *In doctrine shewing uncorruptedness, gravity, sincerity and sound speech that cannot be condemned.* They must *be instant in season, and out of season*; and *reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.* They must pray much, and with great earnestness for the success of the Gospel, *that it may have free course and be glorified*, in the conversion of multitudes of sinners, and the establishment and consolation of believers. They must also *be burning and shining lights in the world*, exemplary in their lives, edifying and instructive in their conversations; *in all things shewing themselves patterns of good works.*

3. What

3. What a blessing is a faithful Minister of Christ. *He brings good tidings of great joy; that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.* He exhorts and intreats all who hear him, by the mercies of God, the love of a Redeemer, and the value of their immortal souls, *to mind the things that belong to their peace, before they are hid from their eyes.* He instructs them in the saving knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; who is the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. He travels in birth until Christ is formed in their souls, and teaches them the divine art of holy living, that they may die a happy death. *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* Rom. x. 5. Faithful Ministers are *the salt of the earth*, to cure the growth of that corruption and wickedness which prevails in it, and to season men's minds with wisdom and grace. And *the light of the world* to instruct and cheer it with the salutary influences of their doctrine and example. We ought from such *to receive with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save our souls; to obey them that have the rule over us, and submit ourselves; for they watch for our souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.*

S E R M O N II.

PHILIPPIANS, CHAP. I. VER. 21.

FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE
IS GAIN.

IN the first discourse upon these words, I proposed to shew, 1. In what respects it is true of every Christian, and particularly of every faithful Minister, that for him *to live is Christ*. 2. Upon what accounts *death is their gain*. 3. To consider the connexion between them; or the influence of a holy life to make a happy death. And having already shewn in what respects for every Christian, and every faithful Minister, to live is Christ, I come now in the second place to shew upon what accounts death is gain to all them who live to Christ.

And in general it is their gain, as the soul then enters upon a state of perfect freedom from all the troubles and calamities, from all the sufferings and temptations, and sorrows incident to human life. By this the blessedness of good men is often held forth in scripture. Thus Isaiah lvii. 1, 2. *The righteous is taken away from the evil to*

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come; he shall enter into peace; they shall rest on their beds, each one walking in their uprightness. And the new Jerusalem above, is described as a place where good men enjoy a safe retreat from all the troubles to which they are now exposed. Rev. xxi. 4. *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nor shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away;* that is, the evils and calamities they endured are gone, and shall never return to afflict them any more. But to excite our desires after this happy state, I will mention some of those evils from which they rest at death, and the positive happiness upon which they enter then, from which it will appear that for them to die is gain.

I. Death is a Christian's gain, as he hath then a complete deliverance from sinning and offending against God. It is true, the reigning power of sin is partly broken in good men in this life by sovereign grace, yet still it dwells and works in them, producing fresh acts of disobedience. But in heaven the very being of sin is destroyed, and not the least remains of corruption shall follow us there. We shall be presented before God without spot or wrinkle, or any imperfection. We shall then be as holy as we can desire, and heaven will preserve our virtue for ever entire. Now the saint groans under sin as his heaviest burden, and is highly pleased with any partial victories he obtains over it. And how does he mourn when it overcomes him; and he earnestly desires an entire deliverance from its power and sway; crying with the Apostle, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?* How will he then congratulate himself and praise God,

God, when he obtains a complete rest from it? Never was a night's sleep so refreshing to a weary benighted traveller, as this rest must be to them who have finished their course, have fought a good fight, and kept the faith.

2. Death is the Christian's gain, as it for ever frees him from the temptations of Satan. It is a constant source of no small uneasiness to him while in the body, that though he hath shaken off the fetters of the powers of darkness, and asserted his freedom in the Lord, that yet he is still exposed to their assaults, and he too often finds them successful to disturb his peace. But when the soul is admitted into heaven, the conflict is at an end. There the devil and his agents shall never enter to disturb the happiness of the righteous, nor to attack their virtue. And when once landed in those peaceful regions, with what pleasure will the Christian look back on the rough and stormy ocean upon which he sailed, and for ever defy those enemies which too often assaulted him here with success. How cheerfully will he then sing that triumphant song, Rev. xii. 10. *Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down which accused them before God day and night, and will never lift up his head to afflict them any more.* The devil and his slaves shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone, that burneth for ever, and shall never pass over the gulph fixed between the righteous and them, to tempt them, or interrupt their joy any more.

3. Death is gain, as it delivers the Christian from all doubts concerning his state, and all fears of future condemnation. It is true, indeed, that when we are justified by faith, we have peace with
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God through Jesus Christ; and there is no vindictive wrath or fury in him against us. But notwithstanding this, how often do we incur his fatherly displeasure, and mistake it for eternal wrath. But in heaven he will be angry with us no more. He will, in the day of judgment, with his own mouth, pronounce his servants righteous, and entirely free them from an accusing conscience and a condemning law. For the faithful and true witness hath said, that they who believe in him shall never be brought into condemnation. The Lord will bless them, and they shall be blessed for ever. Their spiritual senses will then convince them that all their jealousies were vain, and that God is infinitely good, and they eternally happy.

4. The Christian is also delivered from all those divisions and quarrels which we too often are engaged in with much keenness in this life. There will be no parties or factions in the celestial world. One will no more say, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; nor a third, I am of Cephas. With their bodies they lay aside all their feuds and animosities, and narrow sentiments, which their different educations and ways of thinking, and their too great esteem for some men's persons, may have unhappily involved them in here below. They shall be all of one mind, and one heart, and embrace each other in the arms of a sincere and ardent charity; and be one sheepfold under that one shepherd the Lord Jesus.

5. He has a perfect freedom from all grief and trouble on account of other men's sins and misfortunes. We live now in the midst of a false and wicked world; and though we were entirely freed from suffering on our own account, yet the wants and vices of others, a tender concern for the in-

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terests of religion and virtue, and a just abhorrence of abounding profanity and immorality, make a good man very uneasy. When we every day see some ready to starve for want of bread, others languishing under acute pains; one relation ruined by cross accidents, another taking to bad courses, and growing atheistical and profane; this must make our lives very unhappy, though our condition otherwise be never so prosperous. But in the heavenly state we shall have none of these objects before us; for it is a society of holy and happy persons, in which our happiness will be greatly heightened in seeing every one blessed around us. Sin and misery will be for ever confined to hell, in which guilty and wicked spirits will be for ever removed from the seats of the righteous, by situation, and the dissolution of every sympathising tie.

6. He has a perfect freedom from all troubles and ill accidents, to which this mortal state doth expose us. He shall be free from all manner of sickness and disease, from hunger and thirst, from poverty and nakedness, and every thing that occasions grief and pain. He shall no more be obnoxious to the treachery of insidious friends, or the malice of inveterate enemies, nor the cruel reports of the slanderous tongue. He shall then be rid of all his troublesome passions, be in no danger of disappointment as to his designs, or loss of goods, or oppression and tyranny of bad masters. In a word, he will be delivered from every thing that renders his condition now in the least disagreeable; and all his past distresses will no otherwise be remembered, but as it will contribute to his gratitude and delight.

Hitherto we have only considered death in a negative view, as delivering us from the evils and calamities, moral and natural, incident to human life, as a deliverance from sin and all inclination to sinning, from all the temptations of Satan and fears of divine wrath, from all animosities and dissensions, from all sorrow on the account of others, and from all bodily pain and want. But when we take a survey of its positive blessings, we will see that to die is indeed gain. And here a variety of the most desirable things present themselves to our view, as—The great alteration for the better that is made upon the persons of good men :—The glorious place where they live :—The agreeable company they converse with :—The delightful exercises in which they spend their time :—The unspeakable communications of God's love to their souls. Of these I would speak a little, taking the scriptures for my guide.

1. The great alteration for the better that will be then made upon the souls and bodies of good men. That their souls shall then be changed much to the better, is plain from what the Apostle says, Heb. xii. 23. where describing the happiness of the heavenly state, he calls those of mankind who are admitted there, *the spirits of just men made perfect*. The perfection of the soul consists in the perfection of the understanding, which consists in the knowledge of truth; and that of the will, which consists in the choice and love of what is good.

1. The soul shall then be made perfect in knowledge. Here we know but in part; we understand but as children, and see darkly as through a glass : But in the other world, when we are arrived at the full growth of our intellectual faculties, we

shall put away those childish things, and have a far more clear knowledge of God and of his works, than any of the greatest divines or most learned philosophers ever had in this embodied state. Then shall we see God face to face, and know as we are known. Now our knowledge costs us much labour, and when it is acquired, we are always in danger of losing it; but in the other world it shall cost us no pains, and never be forgotten. Then the heavenly mysteries will be all unveiled, the work of redemption shall be our eternal wonder, and we will for ever admire those exertions of divine power, wisdom, love, justice, holiness, mercy and truth, that contrived and executed this glorious plan. Then faith will be swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition. And good men shall be possessed of the highest assurance that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him.

2. The will of the saint also shall be made perfect in love. This is but the natural effect of the former. For the understanding having such clear and complete views of God's infinite perfection and love, cannot but see him as the most glorious and amiable object, and most perfect good; and in consequence of this, cannot but cleave unto him with the whole heart, and find the most exalted pleasure in doing so. Every inferior love will be quite burnt up in this new flame. We shall see such inexhaustible treasures of bliss in God, that we shall desire and delight in him infinitely more than in any other good thing that ever solicited our love; and love him so intensely, until our souls are quite changed into the nature of the beloved, until we are as like him as finite beings can be, and we are in a manner one with him in
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will and perfection, which is the completion of love.

2. The bodies of good men shall also be made perfect in the morning of the resurrection. We shall then be clothed with glorious, spiritual, incorruptible and immortal bodies; even bodies fashioned like unto the glorious body of the blessed Jesus. And what a glorious body that is, will in some measure appear from what the three Apostles saw at his transfiguration, *when his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white and glistering*. Luke ix. 29. Yet with such bodies as these will the saints be clothed at the resurrection, bright as the sun, nimble and active as the wind, and differing as much from what they are at present, as the heavenly mansions do from the prison of the grave, in which they are now lodged.

3. They shall live for ever in the most glorious place. That there is a local heaven, is evident from scripture. To this the glorified body of our Saviour ascended, and thither shall all his saints be gathered, to be for ever with the Lord. The sacred oracles teach us to consider heaven as far above all those parts of the creation that are visible to our eyes, and out of the stench and vapour of this corruptible earth; for it is stiled the highest or third heavens. There God has erected his throne, and it is a throne of glory, high and lifted up; and there it is that Jesus dwells in person. And must it not be a delightful place, which, besides all its natural beauties, is adorned with the illustrious presence of the Son of God, who, after all his triumphs over the powers of darkness, is invested with the fulness of power and glory, and made lord and ruler both of angels and men. Yet no worse a place than this will be assigned to the
righteous,

righteous, no meaner a presence shall they stand in, and no less a glory shall they continually behold.

4. They shall spend their time in the delightful company of holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. There is in heaven the great assembly of archangels and angels who never lost their integrity, and so much resemble their creator in goodness and love, who bear the warmest affection to holy souls, and consider it as their greatest delight to make them happy. There is in heaven too the redeemed and ransomed of the Lord, who are free from every error and mistake, from every peevish and narrow sentiment, and whose hearts are sweetened with a divine goodness and universal love. There angels and glorified saints live in one family, are formed to the sincerest friendship, and rejoice in each other's happiness. And with what delight must good men spend an eternity in such honourable and loving company. There they shall rejoice in the society of patriarchs and prophets, of apostles and martyrs, and all those burning and shining lights whose zeal for God and religion have embalmed their memory amongst good men. In a word, all those whom we loved, and whose company we ever desired, shall then be restored to us, so as never to be separated any more, but to live in perfect peace, and to enjoy their company in all their endearments of friendship and love.

5. Good men will be employed to all eternity in the most delightful manner. And though we are much to seek as to particulars here, yet we may be sure that their employments are such as are suitable to their perfect natures, the glorious place where they live, the presence of that God before whom

whom they stand, and the noble company with which they converse. 1. There we may be sure they are employed in the contemplation of God and his works, in whose light they see light. The acquisition of knowledge will be their delightful exercise, of which they will never grow weary, but improve to all eternity. 2. They will be employed in loving God, and breathing out their desires after him. As our knowledge at present is narrow, so our love is languid. But in heaven both are raised to the highest pitch, and the one in proportion to the other. The more the saints in heaven know of God, the more they admire his beauty, and the more ardently do they love him. There they love God with all their hearts, and cannot chuse to do otherwise, when they have such inexhaustible charms of beauty before them, and no rival of their affections. 3. But of all their works that of praise and thanksgiving is taken notice of in scripture as their peculiar office and constant employment above, Rev. v. 10. iv. 11. v. 9, 10. xv. 3. What pleasant lives must they needs live, who have the object of their praises ever before them to enliven their devotions. 4. In heaven the saints are employed in the exercise of love to their fellow subjects. Charity never faileth, but is perfected there, and displays itself in all the acts of friendship to angels and holy souls. There they shall entertain each other with the most delightful conversation, and with overflowing hearts speak of that grace whereby the divine life was begun and carried on to perfection in their souls; of the excellencies and love of Christ, and of the spirit; the temptations they have overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and the gracious care of divine providence in bringing them to glory.

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6. But lastly, they shall receive the ineffable communications of divine love. God will there display to his saints the mild rays of his reconciled face, and manifest as much of his uncreated excellencies as created beings can support. They shall drink of the rivers of divine pleasure, and have every thing that can satisfy an immortal spirit in all its capacities of delight. The happiness of heaven consists in being ever with the Lord. And to be always in his company to whom they are indebted for their salvation, is a considerable part of their happiness: to see their great benefactor so well rewarded for his wondrous love; to see him in his human nature exalted at the Father's right hand, far above principalities and powers, having a name that is above every name, and allowed to appear continually in his presence, must afford infinite joy. And the Lamb shall lead them to fountains of living waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And they shall have delightful communion with the Holy Spirit, who concurs with the Father and the Son as on earth, so in heaven, to warm the hearts of the whole assembly of the first-born with his refreshing influences of light, of life and joy. And all this happiness will never come to an end: for heaven is the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, the righteous go away into eternal life, and the pleasures on God's right-hand endure for evermore.

I proceed, in the 3d place, to consider the connection between living to Christ; and gaining by death; or the influence of a holy life to make a happy death.

And here let it be observed, that our living to Christ does not merit that we should be happy after death. As soon may we think to purchase a
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great estate with a few farthings, as to merit heaven by our works. Says our Saviour, Luke xvii. 10. *When ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants.* The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But the connection lies in what follows :

1. According to the constitution of the Gospel, living to the glory of Christ is necessary to fit us for a happy death. *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* John iii. 3. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* Matth. vii. 21. *It is by a patient continuance in well doing, that we must seek for glory, honour, and immortality, and eternal life.* Rom. ii. 7. We must live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, if we would look for the blessed hope. Titus ii. 11, 12. And we must have our fruit unto holiness, if we would have our end, everlasting life. Rom. vi. 22.

All these expressions imply a religious life and conversation for a continuance. But I take not upon me to say, how much of every person's life must be spent in a virtuous course to fit him for death, that he may die comfortably ; nor will I presume to limit the mercy of God, by affirming that none are converted and made alive unto righteousness in the last moments of life. This, however, I will maintain, that such instances are extremely rare ; and it is a strong proof that death-bed promises are for the most part ineffectual, since few such bed promises are regarded by them that recover. The promises of the Gospel, for the most part, are made to such as live holy lives for a continuance ; not to such as enter upon religion at the

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conclusion of a life spent in sin and rebellion against God. And it is but small consolation that can be administered to them, who make such a desperate delay of the great work for which they were sent into the world; and it is scarcely to be expected that they should die with cheerful hopes of *being for ever with the Lord.*

2. In the very nature of the thing, living to Christ, is a happy preparation for dying comfortably. If we consider heaven as a state, as well as a place, the person who expects to be happy there, must have a taste and relish for its employments and enjoyments. Happiness is a relative thing, and requires a correspondence between the faculties that are to be entertained and the objects that are to be enjoyed. Heaven is a holy place; and without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Into the new Jerusalem above nothing that defileth can enter, nothing that is impure can subsist. And if a wicked man were admitted there, with all his impure inclinations and sinful affections, he could not be happy, but would be miserable amidst all its pleasures and joys; because they would be no ways suited to his taste. What pleasure could he have in the immediate presence of a God of infinite purity, since in his light he would see himself in all his deformity and guilt? None at all. What satisfaction could he have in singing the praises of God and of the Lamb, who was never accustomed to these devout exercises upon earth? Surely none. Could he have any delight in doing the will of God, who had lived upon earth in open hostility against him? None at all. No more could he be happy in the society of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, whose hearts are sweetened with a divine goodness, and live in love; because

his is full of enmity and sin. Heaven would be no heaven to such a person, and he would wish to be any where else, except in hell, where his torment could only exceed that which he would endure in a place which would shew him to himself in all his sin and ugliness. We must be made new creatures before we leave this world, or else we can never enjoy the happiness of the next? *For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?*

But, upon the other hand, a religious life qualifies us for the joys of heaven, and makes us to long for that happy state in which all our virtuous desires shall be satisfied to the full. It enlightens and exalts the mind, it purifies and refines the heart, and fits the soul for the contemplation and enjoyment of God and Christ. It is the beginning of heaven upon earth, and an anticipation of eternal happiness. And we can never have a temper suited to the work of heaven, unless we are inured here to such a course of holiness as I was describing under the first head.

If upon Gospel principles we do repent, and yield ourselves unto the Lord; if we live to his glory, and have a temper and conversation according to his laws; such a course of life will naturally prepare us for such a death. But a life spent in hostility against God, can never terminate in such a death, without the interposition of a miracle of divine power and grace. And must not that man be most daringly presumptuous, who will persist in his sins unto the last, in the vain hope that God will work a miracle for him, that he may die happily. Let none of us deceive ourselves with such

vain expectations, but let us *live to the Lord, that death may be gain.*

3. The kindness and love which Christ bears to his faithful Ministers require, that they should be distinguishingly rewarded hereafter. They are often reviled, maltreated, and persecuted for his sake here; and is it not most reasonable to think, that he, who is such a bountiful Master, as not to let the meanest services pass unnoticed and unrewarded, will surely recompence his faithful Ministers for all their sufferings and eminent services in his cause. Accordingly he hath promised this, Luke xviii. 29, 30. *And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.* Luke xxii. 29, 30. *And, I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* And it is said Dan. xii. 3. "They
" that turn many to righteousness shall shine as
" the stars for ever and ever."

What now remains is the improvement of this subject.

1. Since *death is gain* to every one who *lives to Christ*, this consideration should teach us patience under all the evils and sufferings which we may meet with, and it ought to make us contented and willing to leave this world when God pleases.

Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. No affliction for the present is joyous but grievous. And had the Christian hope only in this life, he would sometimes be most miserable. But there is a period fast approaching, when the
righteous

righteous shall enter into peace, and rest upon their beds, each one walking in his uprightness, reaping the comfortable fruits of their sincerity towards God, and their constancy and sufferings in his cause. The grave is a place of rest and freedom from every evil and trouble. *There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest; there the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor, the small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master.* As soon as good men enter into another world, they are exempted from all manner of suffering; and nothing but the joyful remembrance of their constancy and patience under tribulations, and their plentiful reward shall remain with them there. And the more our troubles have abounded here, the greater shall our happiness be hereafter. Let us then manfully bear up under all the afflictions which we may be visited with in this life, which at the longest are but of short duration; knowing that if we suffer with Christ, we shall be glorified together with him: *And our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

The consideration of death's being gain unto a good man, should take off the dread and terror of it, and ought to make us contented to leave this world. It is only the going through a short dark passage, into everlasting glory; through a narrow and difficult gate, into such joys, as eye never saw, ear never heard, and such as are too big for the heart of man to conceive. And who would not be willing to be absent from the body, that he may be present with the Lord.

2. The connection betwixt living to Christ, and death's being gain, ought to be improved by us all,

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as a powerful motive to engage us to live lives of piety towards God, of justice and charity towards men, and of temperance and purity towards ourselves. When we leave this world, nothing will accompany us into another, but the good works which by divine grace we have been enabled to perform here. These will stand by us, when the honours, the riches and pleasures of this life are all left behind us. There is one way indeed to make to ourselves friends of riches in particular, to wit, by giving to the poor; hereby *we provide ourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.* Our great and righteous Judge will remember all our works of faith, and labours of love, and eternally reward them. What encouragement is this to holiness and obedience!

This life is only the beginning of our existence, a state of probation and discipline for another life; and our condition hereafter shall be happy or miserable, according to our present conduct and behaviour. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. Gal. vi. 7, 8." Let us all then mortify the deeds of the body that our souls may live. Let us all make conscience of our duty, and endeavour to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; and let us not live unto ourselves, but unto Christ, and walk even as he also walked. Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Keep yourselves

selves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life. Walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. And after we have done all, let us ascribe the glory to the free and unmerited grace of God.

3. This subject shews us the happiness of all Christ's sincere servants both in life and death. *For them to live is Christ, and to die is gain. And whether they live, they live unto the Lord, or whether they die, they die unto the Lord; whether therefore they live or die they are the Lord's.* Rom. xiv. 8.

As this is true of all the faithful servants of Christ, I trust that it is particularly so of your late reverend and worthy pastor, whom God has been pleased to call home to himself. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, whose fruits are goodness, righteousness and truth, and of that faith which purifieth the heart and worketh by love. As I am satisfied that there is nothing in sacred writ that forbids the setting forth to a Christian assembly, the useful and exemplary life and character of a faithful Minister, to excite us to live a righteous man's life, that we may die his death, and our last end be like his; I will therefore, without any other apology, give you some sketches of my reverend and dear brother's character; both to gratify the expectations of an affectionate congregation, and to stir you up to live as he lived.

The Reverend Robert Lawson, A. M. was the son of a Minister of the church of Scotland *,

* Mr. John Lawson Minister of Closeburn in the Shire of Dumfries,

whose

whose zéal for the truths of the Gospel, whose unwearied diligence in the various duties of the pastoral office, whose exemplary piety, and inflexible integrity, made him highly esteemed by all who knew him. Under his inspection, he was blessed with a virtuous education : And it is probable that the Father's instructions and example were the means under God of his receiving those deep impreffions of real religion which appeared in all his discourses and in all his actions.

He was educated for the ministry at the University of Glasgow, studied divinity under the learned and judicious William Leechman, D. D. an ornament of his country, and was licensed to preach the Gospel by that Presbytery of which his father was a member. He was unanimously called to be Pastor of this church upon the death of the Reverend Mr. William Steele, and laboured among you in the work of the ministry with much approbation and success.

God gave him good natural abilities ; and these, improved by a liberal education, and sanctified by divine grace, produced those ministerial gifts and graces for which you so justly esteemed him. As he firmly believed, so he constantly inculcated all the doctrines and duties of Christianity. He prayed and preached in the most devout, earnest and affectionate manner, and in both these duties shewed such an ardour of spirit, as engaged your attention and love. He had such satisfaction in being employed in his master's work, that he hath often told me, that though he heard much better sermons than his own, yet he was uneasy when he was not employed in the pulpit upon the Lord's day. He loved his congregation with the warm-
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est affection, and his heart's desire and prayer to God for you all, was, that you might be saved.

How regular and fervent was his devotion in private, as well as in public ! How great was his love to his blessed Lord and Master ! With what zeal did he assert his divinity and satisfaction, the necessity of his imputed righteousness to a sinner's justification, and of the operations of the Holy Spirit to begin and carry on the divine life in the soul. He was much concerned when he heard these essential doctrines of the Gospel denied, and contended earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

The love of money is a sordid passion, and the root of much evil ; but our deceased brother gave it little or no place in his heart. He could well say, " He sought not yours, but you. He never hunted after legacies or pecuniary advantages ; much less did he follow any indirect courses to obtain them. His generous and noble soul was above all these sordid views ; and perhaps few people despised money more than he did.

He carefully cultivated and practised the social virtues. He was sincere and upright in all his words and actions, and could not bear with dissimulation and deceit. He was good-natured, courteous, and ready to forgive. A lover of all good men, how much soever they differed from him in lesser matters ; and never made his own sentiments the standard of judging of the character of others. He was kind and beneficent to the poor, most sympathising towards all in affliction, and ready to assist and comfort them. He was also exemplary in the several private and particular relations of life ; being a most dutiful son,

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a loving

a loving brother, an affectionate husband, a tender father, a just and easy master, an obliging neighbour, and a most steady friend.

He was remarkably patient under afflictions. For several years he had enjoyed but little health. The warmth and earnestness with which he both prayed and preached, and from which he could not restrain himself, greatly hurt his consumptive constitution; and I doubt not but that it contributed to the shortening of his days.

Having lived for many years in the greatest intimacy and friendship with our deceased brother, I commonly visited him twice a week during his last illness. He had been seized with a violent cold and hoarseness, to which he was very liable, occasioned by his walking from his house at Hackney to London upon a very cold and snowy day, to perform divine service. When I saw him a few days thereafter, he told me, "That he had been, " and still was extremely ill, and that he thought " he should not recover, but that he was resigned, " and prepared to die." He frequently told me, as well as several others who visited him, "That " he had the fullest assurance of his future and " eternal happiness, and did no more doubt of it " than of the sun's being in the firmament." When I observed to him, that the full assurance of faith was not the privilege of every Christian, he said, " He knew it well, and therefore had the more " reason to bless and praise God for his distinguishing goodness to his soul."

Once or twice his friends entertained hopes of his recovery. He himself thought he was a good deal better, and said, "That he would be thankful " to God if he was spared, but did not desire to " live any longer than he might be useful, and " wished

"wished rather to depart and to be with Christ." Death had nothing terrible to him in the prospect of it. With the greatest calmness and minuteness, he gave many suitable directions and advices to his wife, with respect to her own conduct, and the management of his children; and he settled all his worldly affairs, and ordered the manner of his funeral in the same easy and agreeable way, that a man, who was going from home for a few days, would give directions about the management of his domestic concerns in his absence.

All his hopes of eternal life were founded upon the satisfaction, righteousness and intercession of the Son of God, our Saviour. He often said to me, "That he was an instance of God's restraining, assisting, and comforting grace." He had been long in the school of affliction, but blessed God for all his corrections, saying, "That they had been sanctified to him, in weaning his heart from the gaieties of life, and in giving him a more devout and heavenly turn of mind."

During his illness he was willing to be as useful as he could to his congregation; he saw every person of it, as long as he was able to speak to them, who came to inquire after him, and gave them pious and pathetic exhortations. The last day of his life he roved now and then, but even in these roving of the mind, there appeared a religious propensity; for he thought he was either praying or preaching, or administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He was perfectly sensible for some little time before his death, and quietly breathed out his soul into the hands of his Creator and Lord, whom he had served with his spirit in the Gospel of his Son. *Mark the perfect,*
and

and behold the upright man, for the end of that man is peace. Psal. xxxvii. 37.

Thus lived and died this faithful Minister of Christ, in the 50th year of his age, having for near 19 years ministered unto you in holy things.

4. Let us all learn to make a due improvement of this mournful event.

You my friends who sat under his ministry have lost a faithful and zealous Pastor, who loved you with the most sincere affection; who took the highest pleasure in preaching the Gospel of Christ, and performing the several duties of the pastoral office among you; and was willing to spend, and to be spent in his Master's service. Well may ye weep and mourn under such a loss; when your pious and friendly Pastor is taken from you. *Jesus wept* at Lazarus's tomb. John xi. 35. But restrain your grief within bounds; and do not sorrow as those who have no hope; *For them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.*—Call frequently to your remembrance his instructions, admonitions and reproofs, and endeavour to profit by them. And let me tell you, that if ye do not, they will rise up against you in the day of judgment.—Be ye followers of him, as he was a follower of Christ. And if ye live as he exhorted you to live, and copy after his example, you will both save your own souls, and be gems in his crown of joy and rejoicing in the day of Christ.—Pray that he may be succeeded by another “able Minister of the New Testament, “not of the Letter, but of the Spirit, a work- “man that need not be ashamed, rightly divid- “ing the word of truth, and thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work.” Christ has

has promised to give Pastors according to his heart, to feed his people with knowledge and understanding, Jerem. iii. 15.

To conclude: Let us all learn from this mournful event, to consider our latter end, and to apply our hearts unto wisdom. Let us all study to live the life of the righteous, that we may die his death, and our last end be like his. *For blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit; that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.*

F I N I S.



